

Jehane Teilhe-Fisk, *Paradise Reviewed: An Interpretation of Gauguin's Polynesian Symbolism*. Studies in the Fine Arts: The Avant-Garde, o. 31. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1983. Pp. 315. \$44.95.

Paradise Reviewed, in the words of its author, "intends to show that Gauguin's works during the ten years he lived in French Polynesia . . . are . . . not only reliable but at the same time beautiful documents of sensitivity and insight into the culture of French Polynesia." This monograph also is a document of sensitivity and insight.

Teilhet-Fisk first examines selectively those aspects of Gauguin's background, such as his initial childhood exposure to the local peoples of Peru, that planted in him the first seeds of receptivity to Polynesian (and other non-European) cultures. In successive chapters, she recounts details of his life in Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands, as well as the ways in which Polynesian culture--most particularly, life in Tahiti--enabled him to synthesize his diverse interests in non-European art and religions into his own unique art style.

Previous authors have noted the existence of Polynesian design motifs in Gauguin's art, but perhaps none have so successfully shown the multi-dimensional way in which Gauguin's interests in Tahitians and a Tahitian awareness of life enhanced his own theosophical interests and made his art so much more than one that merely borrowed designs. Gauguin did not just borrow, he absorbed and amalgamated designs, ideas, and concepts from the art and the people around him. It is the integration of Polynesian phenomena with Javanese figure types, images of the Buddha, and Christian iconography (together with various aspects of Buddhism and Christianity) that makes his art, and the effects of his Polynesian exposure, unique.

The art works examined in this book include many familiar paintings as well as numerous wood carvings that are less well known. Of particular value is the inclusion of photographs of pertinent Polynesian art objects from Tahiti, the Marquesas, Austral Islands, Easter Island, and New Zealand, as well as photos of Tahitian people and *maraes*. The immediate juxtaposition of these photos with reproductions of Gauguin's works makes the nature of their relationship all the more obvious.

The book, which is a revision of Teilhet-Fisk's doctoral thesis for the University of California at Los Angeles, is thoroughly documented with extensive footnotes and bibliography and is fully illustrated. The only possible criticisms are the lack of color plates and the absence of references in the text to specific plate numbers--more than likely not the fault of the author. Her careful observations of Gauguin's personal and artistic devel-

opment, as well as her own familiarity with Polynesia and Polynesian art, lend a perspective and a perceptivity to this monograph that make it outstanding and well worth reading.

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